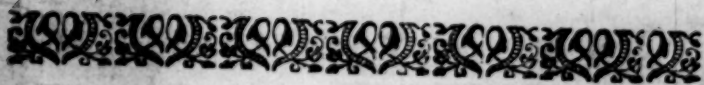


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Mr. *Asbley's*
S E R M O N
ON THE
Great D U T Y
OF
CHARITY.





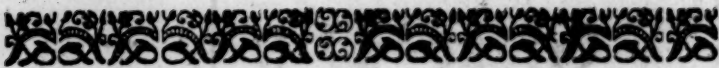
THE
Great D U T Y
OF
CHARITY,
considered and applied
IN A
SERMON,

Preached at the Church in
Brattle-Street, Boston, on the
Lord's-Day, *November 28.*
1742.

By *Jonathan Asbley*, A.M.

Pastor of the Church of CHRIST, in *Deerfield.*

B O S T O N:
Printed by J. DRAPER, for S. ELIOT, in *Cornhill.*
1742.



P R E F A C E.

COURTEOUS READER,

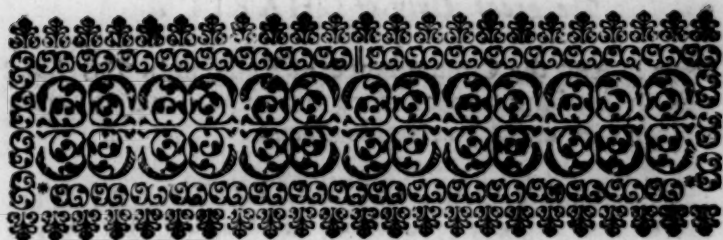
*W*HOEVER thou art, into whose Hands these following Pages may fall ; I ask the Kindness, that thou wouldst read without Prejudice : I can assure you I had an honest Intention in delivering of it ; and hope you will have the same in reading.—If what I have said in the Introduction to my Text may open your Eyes, when you see the same Disorders in our Churches, as were in the Church of Corinth, and reclaim you from them : Or, if it be a Means of removing the Prejudice of your Mind against Things of a serious Nature, when you find there were the same Irregularities in the Church of Corinth (at the same Time that the Fruits of the Spirit were evidently amongst them) as are amongst us at this Day of the Grace of G O D, in the hopeful Conversion of many in our Churches : Or if it excite in you earnest Prayers and longing Desires after that Charity which is greater than Faith and Hope, which is the Life and Soul of Religion here, and the Happiness of Heaven above ; let G O D have all the Praise ; my End is answered.

I am your Servant in the Gospel,



J. Ashley.





THE
great DUTY
OF
CHARITY

consider'd and applied.



1 COR. xiii. 1. 2. 3.

*THO' I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels,
and have not Charity, I am become as sounding
Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.*

*And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all
Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all
Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no
Charity, I am nothing.*

*And though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor,
and tho' I give my Body to be burned, and have not
Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*



HOEVER carefully reads this *E-
pistle* of the *Aposle* to the Church of
Corinth, and examines their State by
what the *Aposle* says to them, and of
them, and then brings his *Tho'ts*
down to our own Times, and the State
of Religion amongst us, cannot, I
think, well avoid running a Parrallel between *Us* and
Them:

Them : And the Circumstances of Religion in *Tais Land* will in nothing appear very different, and in *many Things* will exactly resemble *Theirs*.

The Apostle Owns, and blesses GOD for it ; That there was a very plentiful Effusion of the Divine Spirit on the Church of *Corinth* in his extraordinary Gifts, such as *Tongues*, *working Miracles*, *Propheying*, &c. And in his common, and saving Graces on the Hearts of Believers ; enlightning and comforting their Souls ; *Chapt*, i. 4. — 8th Verse,

And it is fully evident to every unprejudiced Mind, that GOD has remarkably shower'd down his Spirit on the Churches in our Land (not indeed in his extraordinary Gifts of *Tongues* and *working Miracles* ; for these are not necessary for us, nor to be expected ; but) in his common and saving Operations on the Minds of Men, in convincing, converting, edifying and comforting his People.

But yet, It is observable, That in the Church of *Corinth* there was much Contention and Division in religious Matters : They fell into diverse Sects and Parties, who were too much void of Charity towards each other : One said he was of *Paul*, another of *Apollos*, a third of *Cephas*, or *Peter*, a fourth of *Christ* ; and each Party was concern'd to exalt it self, and pull down the other ; therefore the Apostle expostulates with them as he does in the 11th, 12th and 13th Verses of the 1st Chapter. And herein we are not unlike them : Almost endless are the Sects and Parties amongst us ; Some Followers and Admirers of one, and some of another ; nor is there a small Degree of Contention amongst us : Our religious Debates are the common Topick of Conversation with all.

And then, What was naturally consequent upon the Church of *Corinth's* falling into divers Sects and Parties, they were guilty of a very sinful exalting those Men who were at the Head of their Sects, above the Place of *Instruments* ; and setting them up in the Room of

of GOD, as tho' they could impart Faith and Salvation to their Followers: Hence the Apostle addresseth them in the 3d *Chapter* 5th, 6th and 7th *Verses*. Nor can we excuse ourselves in this Point; for the Persons of some have been evidently had in Admiration; and they have been set above the Place of Means and Instruments.

Nor was the Church of *Corinth* free from uncharitable Judging and Censuring one another; and even the Apostle himself was not spared, but fell under their Censures; and therefore he lets them know, it was a small Matter to be judged of them or any other, *Chapt. 4. Vers. 3, 4, 5*. And I need not spend Time to show you how far this Evil of Judging and Condemning our Brother is spread amongst us.

And in the Church of *Corinth* there was a Disposition in many to despise and reject those Ministers, who had been labouring amongst them; and by whose Ministry they had believed; and to heap to themselves Teachers of more Eloquence, greater Zeal and Gifts as they imagined: And hence the Apostle reproves them, as he does in the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th *Verses* of the 4th *Chapter*. And who can be ignorant that it has been too much the Temper amongst Us, to lay aside stated Ministers of the Gospel, and to set up *Novices* without end to be our Teachers?

Again, Discipline in the Church of *Corinth* was almost wholly neglected; they were grown so conceited of their Attainments, that they would not submit to Order: Offenders could not be called to an Account: And even a notorious *Fornicator* was let alone: See the 5th *Chapter*. And how greatly is Church-Discipline destroyed in many Places with us: Some are grown so zealous and conceited of their own Graces, that they cannot be brought to submit to the Order of Churches; and even despise Reproof.

So also in the Church of *Corinth* there was a Disposition to abuse the Liberty of the Gospel; and thereby
dissolve

dissolve the civil Relations of Life : The Wife to depart from the Husband, and the Servant to rebel against the Master, under a Pretence of christian Liberty : And this moved the Apostle to write as he did in the 7th Chapter from the 13th to 22d Verse. And it is well known there has been something of this Spirit, in our Land : Some have been upon the Point of breaking the Bands of these Relative Duties because of Unconversion ; the Wife to forsake the Husband, and the Servant disobey his Master.

Again, We may observe in the Church of *Corinth* an unbecoming Stiffness and Unyieldableness towards one another ; not avoiding the Occasions of Offence to one anothers Conscience, as they ought to have done ; some would eat Part of those Beasts which were slain to be sacrificed to Idols, and perhaps in the Idol's Temple with their Worshippers, saying an Idol was nothing ; however offensive it was to some others ; therefore it is the Apostle gives them such Directions in the 8th Chapter 10th Verse to the end. And can we excuse ourselves in this Point ? Have we avoided giving Offence to one another ; and carefully abstained from Things indifferent because offensive to others ?

It is also easily observed from the Apostle, that there was too great Sparingness towards the Ministers of the Gospel, who imparted spiritual Things to them : Yea, it seems it became a Question with some, whether they were oblig'd to contribute for the Support of Ministers, since the Spirit was so plentifully poured out : And hence the Apostle answers them, who put the Question to him, in the 9th Chapter from Verse 3, to 14. And it is too true of us in this Land (in some Parts of it at least) notwithstanding all the Revival of Religion. There is a greater Backwardness to the Support of Ministers than ever ; as tho' an extraordinary Degree of Zeal excus'd People from supporting their Ministers.

Again, In the Church of *Corinth* there was the Disorder of leaving the proper Business, and Calling GOD had put them in, and invading the Province and Business of

of another. They were guilty of a proud, aspiring Humour, which inclin'd them to set up for Teachers in the Church: And hence the Apostle exhorts them in the 7th Chapter, Ver. 20, 21. And expostulates with them with warmth in the 12th Chapter, Ver. 28, 29, 30 And who is ignorant that this has been, and is still our Case? What Numbers of illiterate Teachers have thrust themselves into the Churches?

Nor was the Church of *Corinth* free of all Pride and Vain-glorying in their Religious Matters: They indulged spiritual Pride, and this it was that stirred up so much Contention. The Apostle tells us they were puffed up one against another, 5th Chapter 2d Verse. They gloried in their Gifts and Attainments, and were forward to discover them; so that many prophesied together: And would to GOD we had been more free from spiritual Pride and vain Ostentation in Religion! Who is ignorant? There has been no small Appearance of it in the Worship of GOD's House?

So also the Church of *Corinth* fell into great Irregularities and Disorders in their religious Assemblies; several taught and exhorted at the same Time. The Women laid aside their female Modesty, and set up to be Teachers in the Church: Therefore the Apostle directs them as he does in the 14th Chapter from the 30th to the 35th Verse. And who is so blind that he cannot see our Disorders described as in a Glass by the Apostle in this Chapter.

And once more, by way of Comparison, The Church of *Corinth* was under the Judgments of GOD for these Things; see the 11th Chapter, Verse 30, 31, 32. And have we not reason to fear GOD is angry with us at this Day, for the many Things which have been amiss: And let us consider wherefore it is his Judgments are still continued in many Respects.

Having thus considered what the Apostle says of the Church of *Corinth*; I ask Liberty of my Hearers to make one Remark, viz. "That the Apostle Paul

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“ in the Judgment of some modern Teachers, was the
 “ greatest Opposer that Religion ever had ; for he in
 “ the first Place acknowledges the Operations of the
 “ divine Spirit in the Church of *Corinth*, and then
 “ proceeds to enumerate, and bear a full Testimony
 “ against all the Extravagancies they were guilty of ;
 “ nor did he think he deserved Religion by it.”

What I have hitherto said, may serve both to let you see the Reason of the Apostle his recommending Charity, and giving of it so high an Encomium ; and also justify me in offering the Words read to your serious Consideration.

The Apostle allowed the *Corinthians* to covet earnestly the best Gifts ; but yet, says he, *I shew you a more excellent Way*, 12th Chapter last Verse ; a more excellent Way for Peace, for Order, for Edification, and to recover them from their Disorders and Confusions ; and this he lets us know is CHARITY : And he told them, and now tells us, that without Charity we are nothing : Notwithstanding all our Gifts, if we have not Charity we are no real Christians ; nothing but empty Noise and Sound. The Doctrine I shall speak to from the Words before us is,

DOCT. THAT whatever Attainments we may arrive to in Religion, if we are void of Charity, we are no real Christians ; nor will they profit us any Thing.

Under this Doctrine I propose these Things,

1st, To open the Nature of this Charity, which is so necessary in our Religion.

2dly, To show that Men may go great Lengths in Religion, and yet have nothing of this Charity.

3dly, That all our Attainments without Charity, will neither make us real Christians ; nor profit us any Thing.

Lastly, Apply the Truth to our selves.

I. I am

I. I am in the first Place to open the *Nature* of this *Charity*, the *Apostle* so recommends ; and without which every Man, as well as he himself, will be nothing.

I am sensible that Use and Custom in these latter Days has confined the Term *Charity* to *Alms-Deeds*, or giving our Wealth to the Poor and distressed ; and so it is only a Fruit or Effect of Charity : But that the *Apostle* does not intend *Alms-Deeds* by Charity, is evident from the Character he gives us of it in the Verses following our Text ; none of which can agree with Charity in the vulgar Sense of the Word, and are compatible only with that *Divine Love* which is so often recommended in the Gospel.

“ CHARITY then is *Love* in the Gospel-Latitude,
“ comprehending *Love to GOD* and *our Neighbour*, in
“ *all the Branches of it.*”

And this Charity or divine Love, the *Apostle* tells us is the *Fruit of the Spirit*, Gal. 5. 22. A Man cannot possibly plant it in his own Soul : All his Care and Pains ; all his religious Duties and Services ; all his Prayers and Tears, will not of themselves subdue that Enmity that is in the Heart to GOD, Rom. 8. 7. and bring the Soul to love GOD with a true Love of Complacency, and resting in Him as a Being of Holiness and Goodness. Nothing but the Spirit of GOD can turn a Man from being not only an Enemy to GOD, but Enmity it self, to love Him with his whole Soul ; so as to make choice of GOD for his Portion and Inheritance forever, and account his Favour better than Life.— The best Education and the best Means, the most pious Counsels, and the best Discourses concerning GOD's Goodness and Mercy can never beget this Love in us without the gracious Operations of the Divine Spirit on our Hearts. Nor can we without the Help of the Spirit ever love one another in a Gospel Sense.— We naturally live in Hatred, Tit 3. 3. We may love as *Publicans* did of old, such as were Friends to them, Mat. 5. 46. But to love all Men, even our Enemies as ourselves, is above the utmost stretch of human Nature,

and only the Spirit of CHRIST can enable us to do so.

And this Charity the Apostle lets us know is a necessary Consequent and Attendant on Faith; for *Faith works by Love*, Gal. 5. 6. This Love never preceeds, but always follows Faith: A Man cannot love as the Gospel requires, before he believes in CHRIST; but if he does believe he will have this Charity: They cannot be separated from each other, no more than the Cause can from the Effect: And if we have not *Love*, we may assure our selves we are destitute of *Faith*.

And, the Apostle informs us, That it is a *fulfilling of the Law*. (Rom. 13. 10.) in both the Tables of it. It inclines a Man to a diligent Attendance upon all the Duties, which the moral and revealed Law of GOD enjoin upon him towards his Maker: He loves to fear, obey, and serve Him: He loves to submit to His Will and attend his Worship, and speak his Praise. Love to GOD makes all the Duties we owe him easy and delightful. And as he knows the same GOD that requires him to fear and serve him, has enjoined it upon him, to do Justice to his Neighbour, to speak the Truth, to be cautious and obliging to all: So he take Pleasure in doing so; because it is the Will of GOD he should. And he is not willing to omit one Duty to GOD, or his Neighbour; for Love teaches him none of the Commands are grievous.

And, the Apostle Peter tells us, this Love is *without Dissimulation* and Disguise, 1 Pet. 1. 22. It consists not in Words, or some courteous and obliging Carriage; but is seated in the Heart; and the truly charitable Man is really as desirous of your Welfare, as he professes to be: He does not speak smooth Words, whilst Gall and Bitterness is in his Heart: He is honest and upright in his Pretensions.

And, this Love is a great Preservative to the Christian against the Allurements, the Flatteries, or Threats of the World; and all the Temptations of Satan.

Hence

Hence the Apostle compares it to' a *Breast-plate*; 1 *Thessalon.* 5. 8 which preserves the Heart from all Wounds from the Enemy. And could we always keep this Charity in a lively Exercise, how would it keep us from the Temptations of Earth and Hell?

And, the Apostle assures us, That this Charity is a sure Evidence of our being *born of God*, 1 *John* 4. 7. thereby we may know whether CHRIST is formed within us; whether all old Things are passed away, and all Things become new within us; for none but the Regenerate love GOD above every thing else, and their Neighbour in sincerity as themselves.

As to the Fruits and Effects of this Love: The Apostle sets them before us in the Verses following our Text; and they well deserve a particular consideration.

Charity, saith the Apostle, *Suffereth long*; it defers Anger, and does not suffer it soon to boil up in the Mind, and discover itself in bitter Words, and railing Accusations. The charitable Man sets a Guard upon himself: If he has any Injuries and Abuses offered him, he turns his Resentments into Pity, and Revenge into a rendering Good for Evil.

It is Kind. It moves the Affections towards such as need our Pity and Compassion: It softens our Hearts into Compassion: It unlocks our Hands to distribute our Wealth to such as want our Alms: It does not suffer a Man to live to himself; but puts him upon doing all the Good he can, and making himself as useful as possible to his fellow Creatures.

Charity, *Envieth not*. In the Greek (*ou Zelo*) is not Zealous, (i. e.) Does not burn with Bitterness towards others. Are they Richer than ourselves; it suffers us not to be uneasy. — Are they endowed with greater Parts, or have they more Credit and Reputation? Charity will not suffer us to be bitter towards them, as tho' they had injured us: Do they differ
from

from us in some things? Charity don't allow us to call for Fire from Heaven to consume them. It will not suffer us to pursue them with Warmth and Bitterness. Charity teacheth us Mildness and Gentleness towards them.

Charity vaunteth not it self; or it may be render'd, does not act rashly. The charitable Man does not despise the Counsel of the Wise and Aged: He is not resolute in his own Purposes, in Opposition to all others: He questions himself, and is ready to prefer the Judgment of others to his own.

Is not puffed up: If he is Rich, he does not value himself for it, and despise the Poor; for his Heart is not set upon this World. Is he honoured and applauded in the World; He does not swell with these empty Titles, for he sees they are Vanity.—Has he greater Gifts or Graces than others, he blesses GOD for them; and does not allow himself to be proud of them; for he knows it is by the Grace of GOD, that he is what he is: And he has not made himself to differ.

Doth not behave it self unseemly, or indecently or unbeautifully; but is a careful Observer of Order and Decency in all Things: It teaches Men to reverence the Superiour, to be courteous and kind to Equals and Inferiours. — The charitable Man observes the Direction of the Apostle, *Chapter 14, Ver. 40.* He does not cry out of Order, as hurtful to Religion, and a Dragon that is to be thrown down and destroyed. He does not bring serious Things into all Companies and Places, to be scoffed at and reproached. He is not willing to expose his holy Religion to the needless Reproach of the Prophane.

Charity seeketh not her own. This Gospel Love does not suffer a Man to look altogether at his own Things; but disposeth him to have regard to the Good of his Neighbour, *Phil. 2. 4.* And in many Things Charity teaches Men to forego their own Profit and Advantage for the Good of others.

Is not easily provoked. Charity calms the Mind, so that the Passions are not easily stirred up and carried forth to wrong Objects.— And could we always have our Love to GOD and one another in exercise: How much above these small Injuries and Provocations should we be? It would not be an easy Matter to stir up Anger and Revenge in our Minds: Like CHRIST we should bear long and pray our heavenly Father to forgive such as despitefully use us.

It thinketh no evil: It banishes Jealousies and Suspicions from the Mind. It does not suffer us to suspect a Man as vile and wicked; when he does not appear so. The charitable Man will not entertain low and base Thoughts of his Neighbour, when he can think honourably and well of him; he is careful to think the best he can.

Nor does the truly charitable Man *rejoice* when Sin is prevalent, and the Iniquities of Mankind abound: He is sorry when Vice is practised openly, and Righteousness is treated with Contempt: Nor is he glad at the Calamity of others: It is no pleasure to him to see Men evil entreated, injured and abused: But he rejoiceth when the Righteous prosper, and are accounted honourable amongst Men; when Truth prevails in the Power of it: And he takes Pleasure in the Innocent's being vindicated from all those Aspersions which have been cast on them.

Charity beareth all things; or as it ought to be rendered, *covereth or concealeth* all things: It does not allow us to divulge the Errors and Mistakes, the Infirmities and the Failings of our Brother: It teacheth to cast a Mantle over them; that they may be hid from the World; that Men may not hate and reproach him.

And the charitable Man is ready to *believe* all things *well* concerning his Brother: Is any thing spoke in his Praise and Commendation, he believes it is true. He does not say, he don't think he can speak
or

or do so well : He believes all things that there may be any Foundation for : If he lives Honestly, he believes him to be so : If he lives like a Christian, he believes him to be so indeed.

And when there are some Things to stagger his Faith concerning his Brother ; yet then he keeps up his *Hope* : Is he spoke evil of, he hopes he is Innocent : Does he err in some Things, he hopes it is not wilfull : Does he fail in his Duty, he hopes notwithstanding he is a good Man, until it is too evident that Sin is his Delight and what he allows himself in. — And it is a plain Breach of Charity, to think our Neighbour unconverted and a Sinner, when his Life is such, that we may hope he is a real Christian.

Charity endureth all things. It disposeth a Man to bear all Manner of ill Treatment, with Patience : If we have this Love of GOD in our Hearts, how easy will it be to be Poor and Low ? Divine Love will yeild us more Satisfaction than all the World : How light a Thing will Reproach and Slander be, if we have Love in our Hearts ? How little will it affect us to be spoken all manner of Evil of ? Love will make the most abusive Treatment easy. — If we have Charity, we shan't think hard to be made the Off-scouring of all Things ; we shall not greatly disturb ourselves let Men say or think what they will about us.

And this Charity, if it be once implanted in our Hearts, it will never wholly fail and die ; we may lose it very much as to the Exercise of it ; but it never will wholly cease, but will be as a *Well of Water springing up to everlasting Life* : When we die, we shall carry it into the other World with us. *Faith*, as it respects future Things, will cease, and end in *Vision*. *Hope* will end also in *Fruition*. But, *Charity* will not leave us ; but will abide with us throughout the endless Ages of Eternity ; and on this Account it is greater than *Faith* and *Hope*, v. 13.

But

But I proceed, *Secondly*, to consider that Men may go great lengths in Religion and yet be void of Charity. So the Apostle supposes in the Words under Consideration, that he might *speake with the Tongue of Men and Angels*; that he might have the *Gift of Prophecy*, *understand all Miseries, and all Knowledge*; that he might have the *Faith of Miracles*, so as to remove Mountains into the midst of Seas, and yet, after all, have nothing of this Love to God, and his Neighbour. I May mention some things Men may attain to, and yet not have this Love the Apostle speaks of.

A Man may be under very great Conviction for Sin, and have a lively Apprehension of his Danger, and the Wrath of God, which his Sins have exposed him to: He may be under great Horror and Amazement, so as to cry out, *The Pangs of Hell have gat hold on me*. He may cry out in the Anguish and Bitterness of his Spirit: His Flesh may tremble, and his Heart be ready to melt within Him, and yet be void of Charity. It is granted that Conviction preceeds Conversion; and evangelical Love follows it: And it is certain, Convictions, yea very strong ones too, do sometimes prove abortive, and don't issue in Conversion; and consequently Love is not the consequent of them. Cain had strong Convictions; said, *his Punishment was greater than he could bear*. Lamech was under great Distress for his Sin. Judas hanged himself in the extremity of his Horror; yet neither of them had the least Spark of this Divine Love. Conviction then is not a Proof a Man has Charity.

So also a Man may reform his Life, abandon his former sinful Courses; and become sober, grave, and temperate in his Actions; and yet have no Charity at all. There are many Things may urge a Man to reform his Life: A Fear of Hell, which he sees his Sin exposes him to; the Uneasiness of his Conscience, fear of Disgrace, or of the Punishment of the Magistrate, may put him upon a more sober Life; and yet he have no Love to GOD; and hence it is too too common such return again to their former Courses,

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like the Sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the Mire, and the Dog to his vomit; and the evil Spirit returns into them again, and has more Power over them than ever: But if they had this Love of GOD in their Hearts they could not have so sinned; for their Seed would have remained in them.

Again, A Man may be very Zealous, and yet be void of this evangelical Love. Zeal is nothing but the Ardour of the Affections, or the engagedness of the Powers of the Soul; and a Man may be zealous in a bad Cause, as well as a good one; and even in Religion itself. A Man may be fired with Zeal, who is a Stranger to vital Piety, and the Love of GOD. The Pride of a Man's own Heart may fire his Affections, and blow him up into a burning Zeal. Education may inspire a Man with a great Degree of it. A Man's own Interest may fill him with it. Thus *Jehu* was all Zeal for the Lord of Hosts, when he was actuated by nothing but his own ambitious Views; and never felt the least Spark of the Fire of divine Love in his Heart. Who more zealous than the Papists? And few or none in our Land have yet equal'd them; but who can think many of them have the least Love to GOD. Zeal is therefore no Evidence of Regeneration, and the Love of GOD in the Soul.

Furthermore, A Man may be greatly distressed and concerned for others; and yet have no Love to GOD Himself. How common is it, when Persons are under Convictions for Sin, and seeking their own Salvation, to look with Pity on their Friends and Companions, who have no serious Thoughtfulness about their own Souls? And these Persons when they have felt the Workings of their religious Affections, may (some of them at least) mistake them for Grace in the Heart; and hastily conclude their own State is safe; and now all their Concern is for others: They may be in great Concern for them, and have not the least Fear about their own State; and we have reason to fear this has been sometimes the Case when they have

have had nothing of the Love of GOD in their Hearts.

And what is consequent upon their hoping their Condition is safe, is a *Joy* and *Delight* in such a Consideration: All which may be when they are deceived, and do not love GOD. Men may take some Pleasure and Satisfaction in religious Duties who are not Regenerate, and consequently do not love GOD: Thus our Saviour tells us of some who *heard the Word with Joy for a Season*, Matth. 13. 19, 20. And the Apostle tells us of some who *have tasted of the good Word of GOD, and the Powers of the World to come*, and yet might *fall away*, Heb. 6. 5, 6. The Prophet *Ezekiel*, was as a *lively Song* to a People who did not love GOD.

And this *Joy* may sometimes arise to such a height, and be so sudden as to be called a *Rapture* or *Trance*; and yet they who feel the same be wholly ignorant of the Love of GOD: The *Imagination* may be raised to a great Pitch; and wonderful Things may be *painted upon the Mind*: The Ideas may be lively, and the Representation pleasing; and yet there may be no Love of GOD in the Heart: This was the Case of *Balaam*; he was in a Trance, Numb. 24. beg.; but who ever imagined him a true Lover of GOD?

A Man may also attain to a *great Degree of Knowledge in religious Matters*; and yet have no real Charity: So the Apostle supposes in the Text. A Man may by long Study and close Application attain a great Degree of Speculation; he may dispute learnedly, and distinguish well in the important Points of Divinity: He may unfold many important Truths; reconcile many seeming Oppositions in the Word of GOD; and yet have no love to GOD, nor his Word.—And some have by a careful Study of the Scriptures, and attentive hearing the Word preached, when under Convictions, in a few Weeks, made such Progress, that they would talk wonderfully of Things they knew nothing about before; and yet after a while manifested themselves Strangers to a Love to GOD.

And many have attained to a surprizing Art of *addressing the Passions*: They have been able to command the greatest Attention; have talked as tho' they had the Tongues of Angels, and yet knew nothing experimentally of the Love of GOD and CHRIST: Some Popish Missionaries will stir up all the Passions, and yet ignorant of GOD and CHRIST. And some of you may remember here, many Years past, a vagrant Preacher address you, with all the Force of Oratory, and drew away your Ears and stirred up all your Passions; and yet I believe none of you in the End supposed him to have the least Spark of divine Love.*

Others have *counterfeited all Grace*, and yet have been Strangers to this Charity: They have appeared exceeding Meek; speaking meanly of Themselves, and all their Duties; they have profess'd to be wholly weaned from the World, and all its Enjoyments; they have talked much of vital Piety, of the Love of GOD and CHRIST; they have seem'd to excell in Holiness and Heavenly-mindedness; but in the End have discover'd themselves to be Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing, They deceived the World, and perhaps Themselves too.

And they may go such a length in Religion, be so constant in Duties; and stir up their own Passions and Affections, till they are confident of their good Estate; and have banished all Doubts and Fears out of their Mind, and yet know not what it is to love GOD and CHRIST. Confidence is no Evidence GOD loves us, nor we Him: Who more assured of their good Estate than the Pharisees? They despised CHRIST's Admonition to escape the Wrath of GOD: They told him they were Children of *Abraham*; and question'd not the Love of GOD to them; but after all their Confidence, they were a Generation of Vipers.

Again, A Man may take Pleasure in *distributing his Goods to the Poor*: He may give largely in charitable

* One May.

Uses ; he may build and adorn Churches ; he may give a vast Estate, even *all his Goods*, to feed the Poor ; a natural Tenderneſs of Heart, Education, Cuſtom, Pride, and other Things may move him to this, and yet he have no real Love to GOD : He may give much to be ſeen of Men, that he may have much Applauſe from the World.

And laſtly, and to add no more here, A Man may arrive to ſuch a *Zeal* in religious Matters, that he may *Glory in Tribulation* ; rejoice in Stripes ; he may go ſinging to a Goal, and prefer it to a Palace ; he may even long to ſuffer Perſecution, and pray that it may come upon him ; and yet have nothing of this Charity : How many poor deluded *Roman Catholicks* have gloried in Perſecution, and tho't they merited Heaven by it ? How many Self-deceived Quakers have run into Perſecution being impatient to ſuffer for Religion : And the Apoſtle ſuppoſes a Man may *give his Body to be burned*, and yet have no Charity.

Thus I have conſidered many Things a Man may attain to and yet have no Charity.

I proceed, *Thirdly*, To ſhow you, That *if he has all theſe Attainments and many more ; yet if he has no Charity, he is no real Chriſtian ; and they will profit him nothing.*

Fiſt, After all, He is no *real Chriſtian without Charity*. *I am nothing*, ſays the Apoſtle, (i. e.) nothing of a Chriſtian. He may be one to Appearance ; the World may judge him ſuch ; he may have a *great Name* to live, yet he is *nothing* in reality ; he is but empty Noiſe and Sound.

For, after all his Attainments, he is an Enemy to GOD in his Heart if he has not Charity. *He that loveth not, is not born of God* ; and every one who is not born of God, *is full of Enmity againſt Him*, Rom. 8. 7. And is it poſſible a Man ſhould be a real and thoro' Chriſtian, who hates GOD ? If he hates the Father will he love the Son, ſubmit himſelf to his
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Government, and follow his Example? This cannot be; for GOD the Father and Son are One; and he who cannot subject himself to the Laws of one, cannot to the Laws of the other.

Nor has that Man, who is void of Charity, that *Meekness* which is necessary in order to our being real Christians: A proud, arrogant Christian, who has not learned of CHRIST to be *Meek and Lowly in Heart*, seems to carry a Contradiction; and it is certain, that a Man is no more than a *nominal Christian*, who has not a meek and quiet Spirit dwelling within him.

A Man who does not Love GOD is not *Heavenly-minded*, as a Christian must be: How can he have his Hopes and Desires, his Expectation and his Conversion in Heaven, where GOD is, whom he don't love, and looks upon as his Enemy? He will not have his Thoughts and Views there, if he don't love GOD.

Nor is it possible He should *aim at the Glory of GOD* in all his Ways and Behaviour as a Christian is required to do, if he has not this Charity. He never will seek the Honour and Glory of an Enemy: *Self* will be the ultimate End of all his Actions: The great Idol of *Self* will swallow up all his Views, and employ all his Actions, and GOD will be neglected so long as he don't love him.

And so long as he is destitute of the love of GOD, he will be void of all *true evangelical Repentance*: He may have a *legal Repentance*, and mourn for Sin as it exposes him to eternal Pain and Torment: But if he does not love GOD, he never will mourn over his Sins, as they are against a holy, merciful and righteous GOD. True evangelical Repentance always follows the Love of GOD; and the Soul repents *because* it loves GOD, and is grieved that it has offended Him.

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Nor has the Man, void of Charity, any *saving Fault*—*Faith works by Love*; and if there is no *Love*, there is no *Faith*, where there is not the *one*, there is not the *other*; for GOD does not separate them. When he begets Faith in our Souls by his Spirit, he gives a living operating Faith; and the necessary Fruit of that is Love. Thus you see a Man if he has not Charity, will be *nothing of a real Christian*.

Secondly, I am to consider, That *all our Attainments in Religion, if we are void of Charity, will profit us nothing at all*.

They never will satisfy the Demands of that Law we are under the strongest Obligations to yield a perfect Obedience to: The Law denounces Death upon us if we fulfill it not; and the Apostle assures us, *Love is the fulfilling of it*. Without Love therefore to GOD and Man we become Debtors to the Law, and fall under the Condemnation of it.

Nor will any of these supposed Attainments in Religion, ever atone for our past Breaches of the Law: We have sinned, and are become Guilty before GOD: His Law condemns us: and in vain to think any Thing we can attain to, so long as we are destitute of Love to GOD, will atone for our Sins.

Nor will they ever move GOD to pardon us and acquit us from the Sentence of Death we are under: They may move Men to overlook our past Miscarriages and forget our Failings; but GOD sees the Heart, and if there be Enmity to Him, he will look upon us Enemies, and condemn us as such.

Nor will these supposed Attainments in Religion ever entitle us to the Obedience and Sufferings of CHRIST: It is upon the Account of these alone we can be justified before GOD; these are the Righteousness GOD will accept: And if we are not entitled to these, we must perish; for after all we can possibly attain to, so long as we have not Faith in CHRIST, which *works by Love*, we have no Interest in the *Righteousness of the*

the Son of GOD: It is only by that Faith, which works by Love, that his Righteousness is *imputed* to us.

Nor will all these Attainments fit us for Heaven, and entitle us to it, if we have not Charity: After all our Zeal and Fervour; if we are void of the Love of GOD we are utterly unfit for that World of Light and Love above: GOD never will admit such as hate him, there; and he will certainly exclude us if we are void of that Love, which is the Business and Happiness of Heaven.

And after all the Pains we have taken and the Attainments we have made, they will serve only for a more pompous Descent into Hell, if we have no love to GOD. The more Knowledge and Zeal we have, the greater our Name and Profession has been, the more fearful and amazing will our Fall into Hell be, if we have not Charity; we shall only be more fit Companions for Devil and damned Spirits. Thus you see all your Attainments if you have not Charity, will neither bring you to Heaven, nor save you from Hell; you will be nothing but most miserable and wretched Creatures, if you live and die without the Love of GOD. Which leads me to the *Application*.

APPLICATION.

Use I. Of *Information*. And what has been said may convince us how *falsly many Judge about Religion*: It is to be feared the most place it in something it does not consist in. Some think it is enough if they are Sound and Orthodox in their Notions and Conceptions about Things; if they understand the Principles of *Calvin*, and believe them, it is enough; Others think Religion consists in being of *this or that* Denomination of Christians: Some think Religion consists in a *round of Duties*, without any Life or Spirit attending them: Others are well pleased with themselves because they have been *Zealous* in some Circumstances of Religion; and discovered a Vehemency against such as have differed from them: But few think Religion consists in what it really does, in that *Charity* which is the Fruit and Consequent of Faith in the SON of GOD.

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What has been said, also gives us too much ground to fear, the *Religion of many will after all their Pains profit them nothing*: There seems to be too little signs of Love either to GOD, or their Brother: A certain Bitterness seems to be too much intermingled with their Religion, they don't seem to love GOD more than the Creature, nor their Neighbour so sincerely as themselves.

And we may try ourselves by what has been said, and examine the State of our own Souls: It is of great Importance for us to know how Matters stand betwixt GOD and our own Souls: And there is nothing we can try ourselves by more safely than the *Love of GOD*. He that *loveth is born of GOD*. And if we can satisfy ourselves in this one Point we can know what the true State of our Soul is. If we love GOD we are born of GOD, and are intitled to eternal Life; but if we love not GOD, we are in a State of Nature, under the Curse of the Law, and a Sentence of eternal Condemnation.

So also we may examine our *religious Duties* and Services, by what we have heard; and see how far they are acceptable to GOD, and profitable to us; for GOD is no farther well pleased with them, nor does he accept of them, only as they are 'done in Faith, and attended with Love; nor will they ever be any farther Advantageous to us, than they proceed from *Faith in Christ*, and are performed in *Love*; GOD never will own nor will he reward those Services which are attended with Hatred to Himself and Rancour to our Neighbour: for *GOD is Love*.

What you have heard may also teach you, to *set a high Value on Charity*. Some of late have endeavoured to depreciate, and undervalue it, by casting the most opprobrious Terms upon it: But the Apostle valued it above *Faith and Hope*; and surely we ought to esteem it above *Zeal and party Spirit*, or a *great Degree of Knowledge*: You cannot overvalue the *Love of GOD*, and your *Neighbour*. It is what every one

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should

most highly esteem and pray earnestly for it : It will be better to us than Ten Thousand Worlds : If we love GOD, he will love us to all Eternity, and we can't be miserable in his Love : It will make us happy and give us inexpressible Satisfaction thro'out Eternity.

Use 2d, Of *Humiliation* and *Self-Abasement*. Let us all be ashamed and humbled before GOD, that we have *so little of this Gospel-Charity*, in which Religion consists : We profess to be the Disciples of a lovely JESUS, who has loved us unto the Death : We have his Example set before us, and his special Command to *love one another* : We all profess to seek the same Felicity above, and hope to live for ever together in Heaven, loving GOD and CHRIST; and one another : And is it not a Shame that we love one another so little here on Earth? Charity is almost banished from us : Bitterness, Censoriousness and Clamour have almost drove Charity out of the Land : But can we be easy whilst we love so little and have so many Heart-burnings towards one another? Can we think how CHRIST loved us when Enemies, and not be ashamed that we cannot love our Brethren? Let us all see wherein we have been faulty in this great Gospel-Duty of *Loving one another*, and confess our Sin before GOD.

Use 3d, Here suffer me to enforce a *Caution* upon every one, to see to it that he does not deceive himself in this important Point. Mistake not a natural Tenderness of Constitution for this Charity : You may have a more tender Heart; and your Affections be more easily moved than others : You may be less cruel and morose : You may have a polite Education, and know how to speak the Words of Decency and Comeliness, and be a Stranger to this Charity. The *young Man* in the Gospel, address'd our Saviour in a delightful Manner; and CHRIST as Man, lov'd him; but he had no Love to GOD : His Affections were upon this World.

This Charity is a Fruit of the divine Spirit, moulding you into the Frame and Temper of the Gospel, exciting in you all the gracious Dispositions of a virtuous

tuous and holy Life : And if these attend not your Charity, it is not such as the Apostle means, and tells you without it you are nothing.

Use 4th, Of *Motive* to us all, to pray earnestly to GOD to *pour out a Spirit of Charity from on High upon us* : It is only GOD can fill our Souls with Love to Himself and one another : It is He alone can destroy that Enmity there is in our Hearts ; and he will be fought to for this as well as all other Graces : And when we consider these Things, shall we not all wish and desire and pray for this Charity

First, It is the *best and only Way*, in order to our *profiting under the Means and Advantages* we are favoured with. We are lifted up to Heaven in Privileges ; but how Barren and Unfruitful are we under these happy Advantages ? And whence comes it to pass, but from hence, that there is so little Charity amongst us ? We don't love GOD, therefore we don't fear, serve and reverence him, as we should do. We have Envy, Strife and Debate amongst our selves, therefore we don't grow in the Christian Life and make Advances towards Heaven ; but was Charity fervent and lively, how much should we profit.

Secondly, This is the only excellent Way to *retrieve us from the miserable Confusions and Animosities we are run into*.— Every one may see they are great and melancholy ; and happy would it be could we recover ourselves out of them. This is the only excellent Way for Peace and Order amongst us, to *put on Charity* : So the Apostle told the *Corinthians*, and his Words are instructive to us : And wou'd all Sects and Parties put on Charity towards one another, we might soon expect that Things would return to their due Order again ; but it's in vain to expect it, if Love does not fill our Hearts to GOD and one another.

Thirdly, Charity, or Love to GOD, and one another, is attended with a *great deal of Pleasure and Satisfaction here on Earth* ; if there was nothing of

Duty in it, it would be well worth our Pains to practice it as much as possible we could : It calms the Passions ; casts out Uneasiness, and Melancholy ; makes the whole Soul chearful : It destroys Anger and Envy, which are *rottenness to the Bones*. Charity saves us from that Jealousy, which is as *cruel as the Grave*. Charity gives a Pleasure to all the Cares and Business of Life ; and it drives away Uneasiness. It is a Sort of Heaven in the Mind : And whilst other Men carry a Hell in their Souls, the charitable Man enjoys the Blessedness of the Spirits above. Who does not long to feel this Love in his Soul ?

Fourthly, By this it is we *become most like to GOD and CHRIST*. How noble is it to be like GOD ? and herein we can resemble Him ; we cannot imitate him in *Faith and Hope*, these Things cannot agree with the Divine Nature : But *GOD is Love* ; there is pure and perfect Love in GOD ; and the more we love, the more we are conformed to his Image. And how much like our LORD JESUS CHRIST do we become by *Charity* ? How pure, how fervent and constant was his Love ? Shall we not long to be like the great GOD, and our ascended LORD, who is full of Love to his Church and People on Earth.

Fifthly, Without Charity *we never shall be fit for, nor can we possibly arrive to an heavenly World* : That is a World of Love, and inconceivable Delight, where there is no Uneasiness and Hatred ; and it is only Spirits who are filled with Love, who are fitted for that State of Blessedness. What Pleasure could a Man take in Heaven who delights in Envy, Revenge, and Strife ? And GOD never will admit any to Heaven, who have not their Enmity subdued, and their Minds cast into the Mould of the Gospel, and prepared to love GOD, and all the Spirits of Light and Holiness.

Lastly, The more we love on Earth, the more our Affections and Desires are drawn out after GOD, and the more we put on Charity to one another, so much

the more *Happy* shall we be when we arrive to the *Paradise* above : The more we encrease and enlarge our Love here ; so much the larger and extensive will it be in Heaven ; and consequently the more Happy and Blessed we must be. Who can think of this, and not pour out his Soul to GOD that he would give him such a Faith in the SON of GOD, as shall fill his Soul more and more with Love to GOD and CHRIST and all the Children of GOD on Earth. Let us wrestle with GOD in Prayer for this Charity : And will GOD of his Grace grant to each one of us to *love* the LORD our GOD with all our Heart, and our *Neighbour* as ourselves.

F I N I S.

